

SUMMARY OF EVENTS  
MIDWEST NATURAL RESOURCES GROUP  
ENVIRONMENTAL ROUND TABLE  
MONONA TERRACE  
MADISON, WISCONSIN  
12 – 14 NOVEMBER 2002

13 NOVEMBER MORNING SESSION

After a welcome and introduction by Colonel William Bales, Commander, Rock Island District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, members and guest speaker gave presentations under two themes: 1) Regional Nutrient and Sediment Loading; and 2) Protecting Regional Ecosystems from Invasive Species.  
. These presentations will be available from the MNRG web site ([www.mnrg.gov](http://www.mnrg.gov)). The presentations were as follows:

***Theme I: Regional Nutrient and Sediment Loading***

Hypoxia in the northern Gulf of Mexico and Nutrients in the Mississippi River Basin (Herb Buxton, U.S. Geological Survey)  
Nutrients in the Great Lakes: Is This an Issue Again? (Paul Bertram, Great Lakes National Program Office, EPA)

**Nutrient and Sediment Loading Technical Sessions**

Identifying High Quality Midwestern Ecosystems: EPA's Approach (John Peritonea, EPA Region V)  
GIS and Remote Sensing Techniques for Identifying Restoration Targets in Watershed Studies (Ricardo Lopez, Environmental Sciences Center, National Exposure Research Lab, EPA, Las Vegas Nevada)  
Great Lakes Tributary Planning Model (Jan Miller, Great Lakes Regional Office, Great Lakes and Ohio River Division, Corps of Engineers)  
Rapid Assessment Point Method (Roger Windhorn, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Illinois)

***Theme II: Protecting Regional Ecosystems from Invasive Species***

Adaptive Management of Invasive Species – Partnering with Federal agencies (Dr. Barry Rice, Associate Scientist, The Nature Conservancy Wildlife and Invasive Species Team)

**Invasive Species Technical Sessions**

Updates on Invasive Species Currently in the Great Lakes and Upper Mississippi River Basins (Marc Tuchman, Great Lakes National Program Office, EPA)  
Status of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal Barrier (Beldon McPheron, Chicago District Corps of Engineers)

Successes and Challenges of Controlling the Invasive Sea Lamprey in the Great Lakes (Gavin Christie, Sea Lamprey Program Manager - Strategic Planning, Great Lakes Fishery Commission)

Proposed MOA Between MNRG Agencies; Use of an MNRG Invasive Species Web Page (John Perrecone, EPA Region V and Jane West, USFWS Region 3)

### 13 NOVEMBER AFTERNOON SESSIONS

#### ***Breakout Sessions.***

Four facilitated breakout groups were formed with the following subject matters:

1. Great Lakes ecosystems sediment and nutrient loading (hypoxia). Roger Nanney, NRCS, assisted by technical expert Jan Miller, COE, facilitated this.
2. Mississippi River tributary nutrient and sediment loading (Gulf hypoxia). Lyn Kirshner, NRCS, facilitated this session, assisted by technical experts: Owen Dutt, COE, and Teresa Woods, USFWS.
3. Great Lakes ecosystems invasive species. Marcia D'amato, EPA, facilitated this session assisted by technical expert Marc Tuchman EPA.
4. Mississippi River Basin ecosystems invasive species. Tom Magnuson, USFWS, facilitated this session, assisted by technical experts Sandy Noble, USFWS, and Jerry Rasmussen, USFWS.

Breakout groups 1 and 2 were tasked to identify programs available from their agencies including: resources, tools (e.g., methods), information and technical assistance that can be used to reduce nutrient and sediment within watersheds.

Breakout groups 3 and 4 were tasked to help develop an inter-agency framework for addressing invasive species and brainstorm for the MNRG Invasive Species web page.

#### ***Focus Area Meetings***

Focus Area Groups convened to identify the actions they could take to effectively address nutrient and sediment loading and invasive species within their Focus Areas and what they needed to accomplish these actions.

### 14 NOVEMBER SESSION

#### ***Breakout Sessions Reports.***

## Great Lakes Nutrient and Sediment Loading (Jan Miller, COE)

The breakout recommendations were as follows:

- Move more toward a regulatory program and away from a strictly voluntary program for nutrient and sediment reduction
- Link TMDLs to the full suite of Federal programs.
- Provide an information summary on Federal programs to support watershed planning, the TMDL program and Remedial Action Plans
- Take on a pilot project on a major tributary with an intensive planning workshop, a “swat team” to evaluate the constituent watersheds. Evaluate the applicability of the entire suite of Federal programs.

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## Mississippi River Nutrient and Sediment Loading (Owen Dutt, COE)

The Mississippi River basin group presented the following recommendations:

- Engage the State and local governments
- Engage the private sector, and non-government organizations
- Develop a unified approach to Federal activities through Focus Areas and overall improved communications.
- Update and automate EPA’s Catalog of Funding Sources.
- Actively pursue monitoring opportunities,
- Develop BMP for restoration projects.
- Work on the ground with willing partners.

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## Invasive Species (Sandra Noble, FWS)

The recommendations of the consolidated invasive species groups were as follows:

- Complete a Memorandum of Understanding to serve as a framework for the Federal Agencies to work together to solve invasive species problems in the Midwest
- Establish a Rapid Response Team. Develop the necessary methods & techniques and call on experts from each of the agencies.
  - Create an ad hoc committee to select a lead agency, possibly the Fish and Wildlife Service, and clearly define roles for each of the Federal agencies.
  - The strategy should include early detection and monitoring.
  - The National Contingency Plan for oil spills might serve as a model. Examine the need for a contingency fund.
  - An education/outreach component should be included with a 1-800 number for reporting incidents.
- Develop new barriers and enhance existing barriers.
  - The existing barrier between the Great Lake and the Mississippi River Basin should be made permanent. A second barrier should be added for backup and greater effectiveness.

- More research should be conducted on how it can be made more effective (e.g., acoustics & air bubbles).
- The release of live fish should be controlled.
- Determine “hot spots” for other barrier locations.

### ***Senior Manager Initial Response to Breakout Session Reports***

The Senior Managers responded with the following points:

- We need to get a more focused approach using our existing authorities for nutrient and sediment management.
- The Maumee River may be a good area to begin a pilot project.
- The EPA catalog of authorities for nutrient and sediment management should be updated and placed on the MNRG home page.
- Perhaps a Rapid Response Team should be established for nutrient and sediment management, too.
- In addition to the Rapid Response Team, there should be a public affairs component to the invasive species approach. There should be education through the media.
- It was important to keep the local landowner involved and educated as to what was going on. The problem needs to be looked at from the bottom up.

### ***Focus Area Reports***

The Focus Group Leader or representative from the following focus groups provided their responses to the challengers of nutrient and sediment loading and invasive species.

Great Lakes Focus Area (Vicki Thomas, EPA)

- The Great Lakes Focus Area Group was continuing to work on the 12 action items in the 2002 Strategy.
- To further the efforts against invasive species, the Group was supporting development of a Rapid Response Team (RRT) and development of a backup barrier that could operate as a second barrier and could serve if and when the first one broke down, or had to be shut down for maintenance. The Group also wanted to elicit more Canadian involvement in the invasive species problem. The National Contingency Plan would serve as a model for the RRT.
- They were seeking development of a catalog of all conservation buffer strips on Great Lakes tributaries.

Southern Lake Michigan Focus Group (Judy Beck, EPA)

- The Focus Group had found 100 web sites relevant to natural resource issues in the Lake Michigan Basin. This is part of the LaMP 2002 Land and Habitat Tool Box. The sites provide tools, data, and funding sources.

- The Group would work with the Lake Michigan Monitoring Coordination Council and the Lake Michigan Leaders Watershed Academy to determine what was needed in each watershed and to provide tools and information to local participants.
- The MNRG should determine how the MNRG area was supporting the national goal of 2 million miles of buffer strips.

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#### Southern Lake Erie (Donna Myers, USGS)

- The Focus Group was planning on holding two meetings concerning establishing the Maumee Basin as the pilot nutrient and sedimentation reduction pilot. The Maumee was a large watershed, 6,000 square miles. They would be looking at involving Federal, state, and local governments.
- The Maumee was the largest contributor to the Lake Erie nutrient loading problem, and reducing phosphorus to Lake Erie could affect the phosphorus loading problem.
- For invasive species, the Group was concerned about the potential for introduction of invasives through three canals that enter Lake Erie, the Ohio – Erie Canal, the Erie – Miami Canal and the Erie – Wabash Canal.

#### Detroit River/St. Clair River (Laura Lodisio, EPA)

- For invasive species, the Focus Group was taking an education/outreach approach by pointing out the importance of native terrestrial and aquatic species.
- The Group was cooperating in coming up with a binational Management Plan for Lake St. Clair being developed by the Corps.
- At a recent International Association of Great Lakes Research (IAGLR) meeting at the U. of Windsor, there was a session on Great Lakes invasives lead by Dr. John Hartig, which developed the concept of a 10-year target for elimination of invasives. The Focus Group thought that it would be a good idea for the MNRG focus groups or an ad hoc committee to coordinate efforts with Dr. Hartwig.
- The Group believed that the Detroit Area was contributing a large amount of phosphorus to Lake Erie through the sewage treatment facilities, combined sewer overflow, and sanitary sewer overflow. It proposed reviewing the data, identifying data gaps and proposing a study to gather additional data as needed.

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#### Upper Mississippi River/Illinois River (Bill Franz, EPA)

- The Focus Group would be reviewing information on a number of watersheds in order to pick one or two to focus on. Nutrient and sediment reduction would be an aspect of the watershed studies. They would be considering the Yellow River watershed as one of the candidates. The NPS would be taking the lead on the Yellow. On the

Illinois River, the Group proposed to add additional nutrient and sediment monitoring

#### Missouri River Affiliated Focus Area (John Sowl, NPS)

- The Missouri River Round Table had recently formed six groups to address natural resource concerns: Water Quality; Species Recovery and Conservation, Adaptive Management and Implementation; GIS and Decision Support Tools; Native American Issues; and Lewis and Clark Education and Outreach. Work is progressing under each of these areas. The group is also developing an outreach tool, Discover a Watershed: The Missouri, targeting elementary education grades 4 – 12.

### ***Questions/Concerns From the Membership***

BG Riley asked if there were any questions or concerns from the membership that the Senior Leaders should address.

- John Sowl asked that he be given a more definitive response to his proposal to do a Yellow River pilot watershed study. The Senior Managers thought that John needed to get input from the Iowa DNR to see if they supported it, and whether there were controversies that would make it difficult to pursue. Bill Schenk thought that it was not inappropriate the NPS take the lead given the NPS's resources in the area, and persons in the Omaha office that could support it.
- Dave Ullrich asked Bill Franz whether he had proposed to merge the three Upper Mississippi Watershed Focus Groups into one, or just coordinate their activities. Bill Franz said they could do either. Bill Hartwig said that it was important to keep all the Focus Areas in MNRG, but that coordination between the groups was a good idea.
- Chuck Spitzack noted that the Minnesota Focus Group had lost its leader because he had changed jobs. A new Focus Group Leader was needed and the Group needed to re-establish. He said he would be willing to step in as Focus Group Leader. Dave Ullrich said that he was happy to see the Corps take over the Minnesota River Focus Group. He said the inactive groups need to establish their goals. Bill Hartwig said that in order to establish or re-establish the inactive Focus Groups, we should meet in the Focus Areas so we could help them get going. We should meet next in Cincinnati. (Note: A scheduling problem will prevent holding the meeting in Cincinnati. Alternatives are currently being considered.)
- Bill Schenk noted that the goals of the Focus Groups were initially conceived as being deliverables that can be accomplished within a 1 – 2 year time frame, and not just broad issues.
- Bill Hartwig said that the Senior Managers had decided to establish the MNRG and have the Federal agencies “get their act together” before involving state and local governments. Did we have our act together

enough to involve them? Dave Ullrich pointed out that the Focus Area Groups had already been involving state and local governments. MNRG needs to coordinate with Tribal organizations, which require different approaches. Yes, we were ready to involve states, tribes, and local governments. The COE meets annually with state DNR directors in order to better coordinate their activities. The MNRG could pursue a similar mechanism to initiate state involvement.

### ***Senior Leader Response to Breakout and Focus Groups & Action Items.***

David Ullrich, Assistant Regional Administrator of EPA Region 5, responded to the Round table with the Senior Manager responses.

### **Breakout Groups**

#### **Nutrient and Sediment Loading**

- MNRG should adopt the recommended pilot program. The effort should strive to better integrate Federal activities with those of state, (tribal,) local, and private organizations. The Southern Lake Erie Focus Group will work on the Maumee River as the pilot.
  - ACTION ITEM: Southern Lake Erie Focus Group proceed with the Maumee Basin pilot.
- In the Upper Mississippi, the Yellow River could be taken up as a pilot watershed project, with special emphasis on nutrient and sediment loading.
  - ACTION ITEM: Upper Mississippi River Focus Group consider the Yellow River as a potential project.
- In the Illinois Focus Area, the emphasis should be on assessment of monitoring, and tying in modeling. There should be specific recommendations on further reductions.
- For both groups there should be an effort to coordinate Federal efforts with those of state and local governments and private organizations.
- The EPA will update its list of funding opportunities.
  - ACTION ITEM: EPA update its catalog of funding sources in support of nutrient and sediment reduction. This should be placed on the MNRG web page.

#### **Invasive Species**

- The FWS will lead the invasive species effort. MNRG agencies must get their POCs to John Rogner. Bill Hartwig will be certain that the lines or coordination area clear.

- ACTION ITEM: Agencies get invasive species contacts to John Rogner for upcoming Mayor Daley meeting in Chicago.
- The MOA should be completed and circulated to the member agencies one month in advance of the March meeting.
  - ACTION ITEM: Invasive Species MOU to be circulated to the MNRG agencies by the first week in February.
- The Rapid Response Team concept should be pursued with the National Contingency Plan as a model. The list of experts supporting such a team should be completed.
  - ACTION ITEM: The Great Lakes Focus Groups should proceed with development of the RRT.
- The immediate needs stemming from the Asian Carp crossing the electrical barrier should be determined.
- The Coast Guard and FEMA should be involved. BG Riley will send letters to the respective agencies requesting their support.
  - ACTION ITEM: BG Riley send letters to the Coast Guard and FEMA requesting their involvement.
- The Southern Lake Erie Focus Area Group should look at the Lake Erie canal situation to see what needs to be done.
  - ACTION ITEM: Southern Lake Erie Focus Group to examine risks and possible responses to potential for introduction of invasives through the canals leading into Lake Erie.

## **General**

- Each group should include education/outreach in its program.

## **Focus Area Groups**

### *Great Lakes*

- Continue to implement the Great Lakes Strategy
- With results from the Lake Erie nutrient studies, identify specific items for follow-up.

### *Southern Lake Michigan*

- The Focus Group should emphasize the Lake Michigan LaMP and specific items from the Lakewide strategy.
- It should proceed to catalog buffer strips.

### *Southern Lake Erie*

- The Focus Group should look into using the Maumee as the pilot for an integrated watershed approach to nutrient and sediment reduction (see nutrient and sediment reduction, above).



- The Focus Group should examine the potential for introduction of invasives into Lake Erie from the three canals and consider appropriate action (see invasive species, above).
- The Focus Group should look into the linkage between invasives (the zebra mussel) and the increase in phosphorus apparently driving the increase in hypoxia.

#### *Detroit River – St. Clair River Focus Area*

- The Senior Managers supported the environmental education/outreach approach with an emphasis on invasive species.
- The Focus Group should team up with Dr. John Hartig and IAGLR as it continues its planning effort on invasives.
- The Senior Managers supported the effort to gather existing information on nutrient loading from sewage treatment, combined sewer overflow and sanitary sewer overflow. The group should develop a scope for additional monitoring and assessment and bring it back to the Senior Managers for funding.
  - ACTION ITEM: Detroit/St. Clair Rivers Focus Group develop a scope and funding estimates for Detroit area nutrients study.

#### *Upper Mississippi River Focus Area*

- It would be good to integrate the activities of the Upper Mississippi Focus Group with those of the Minnesota and the St. Croix, however each group should be maintained separately so that the natural resource problems specific to each area are also addressed.

#### *Illinois River Focus Area*

- The new memorandum of understanding should be coordinated and ready for signature at the next MNRG meeting.
  - ACTION ITEM: Focus Group prepare Illinois River MOU for signature.
- The Focus Group with the help of the Senior Managers should get the membership going.
- Activities at Crow Creek should be continued.

#### *Next Two Meetings*

- There was an obvious need to attend to participation in several of the Focus Area Groups, namely the Ozarks, Fox River and Green Bay, and the Ohio River. To remedy that situation, the agency and group leader in charge of each area should determine what its membership is, see what agencies have not participated, and provide that information to Don Williams so that General Riley can send out a letter to the Senior Managers to get the Focus Groups up and running. The lead agencies for the respective Areas are:

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|-----------------------|--------------------|
| ○ Ozark Plateau       | BLM                |
| ○ Fox River/Green Bay | EPA (+ FWS & NOAA) |
| ○ Saginaw Bay         | FWS (Bill Hartwig) |
| ○ Ohio River          | COE                |
- The next MNRG meeting will include updates on the Cumulative Impacts workshop, now scheduled for some time this fall (2003), and an update on the Wetlands Tracking System, with additional information gathered for the Minnesota River and possible including of a larger geographic area, and progress on how to deal with the inventory aspect.
  - We would attempt to hold the next two meetings at locations that needed some attention to fill out memberships and generate activities and cooperative projects. Colonel Bill Ryan will discuss the possibility of the Great Lakes and Ohio River Division holding the meeting in the Cincinnati area. The Planning Committee will work with him on the meeting agenda. We will plan on holding the May meeting in the Ozark Plateau area, probably hosted by BLM.
  - The Senior Managers will pursue the idea of integrating MNRG activities with those of the Tribes and States. This might be pursued as an arrangement similar to that of the Corps with its meetings at Put-In Bay on Lake Erie each year.

### *Adjournment/Final Words*

General Riley indicated that it would be a good idea to develop periodical providing information on MNRG activities. Don Williams would be providing the minutes summarizing the results of the Environmental Round Table in the near future. After the Communications Sub-Committee was reconstituted, it would also be providing outputs from its activities.

BG Riley adjourned the Round Table at approximately 11:30 AM.